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A
LUTHERAN
ROMANCE

Whitsett

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Note. The Dr. G. D. Bernheim
mentioned in this article is the
author of the well-known book:
"The German Settlements in the
Carolinas."

A LUTHERAN ROMANCE

Dr. W. T. Whitsett Relates the History of a Family of American Lutheran Preachers

This romantic story, which is true in every particular, begins in the year 1800 in the sovereign principality of Hohenzollern-Hechingen in the southern part of Germany, near the River Danube, and not so far from the ancient town of Augsburg, made famous by the Augsburg Confession of 1530. Here lived in 1800 a prominent Jewish family to whom a son was born September 27, 1800. The boy was named John Hermann Bernheim and as he grew up he was given the very best educational advantages. He was especially gifted in language and literature.

The parents being devout Jews, it was their ambition that their son should be a Jewish rabbi, and the son entered upon his religious studies with this in view. His progress was rapid. He dreamed that some day he should become famous for his scholarship and piety like the great Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel. He put his best efforts upon the study of the Old Testament, and upon the Talmud, that great storehouse of rabbinical lore that was accumulated during the first centuries of the Christian era and later became the prime object of Jewish literary effort. The history of the Jews was especially fascinating to him, and he delved deeply into their beginnings back near the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and in the dark deserts of Arabia. He followed their story through Old Testament times, down to the days when Asia was conquered by Alexander the Great; on through the attempt and failure to free Judæa from Roman power, the days of the dispersion of the Jews, and down to modern times. To him it was a thrilling story, and often he meditated upon the Sanhedrin and its ancient power, and the great part played by the Jews in the religious development of the race of men. Finally he gave his attention to the Greek New Testament, and as he saw the life and work and teaching of Jesus he became strangely moved. His heart and conscience were touched as never before, and he became a sincere convert to Christianity. Instead of becoming a learned Jew, and a rabbi of that faith, he became a sincere and humble follower of Jesus.

Parents Disowned Him

The parents were furious and besought him to see the error of his way, but like Paul of old he had seen a great light upon his way, and firmly refused to turn from the truth. They disowned him as their son, and banished him forever from their home. Sadly he turned from the family fireside, and went out into the world. On his journey he stopped one day at a castle, that of a certain Count Von der Recke Vollmerstein. The Count was a member of the Lutheran church and soon began to instruct him in the doctrines of the Lutheran Church after employing him as tutor for his children. Young Bernheim was soon after baptized by the Rev. Karl A. Doering at the church in Elberfeld, and later entered the ministry of the Lutheran Church, laboring for some years as a missionary to the Jews under direction of the London Missionary Society. His work took him to Iserlohn, Province of Westphalia, Prussia, where he was married to Miss Lizetta Dellmann. He remained here five years and during this time three children were born into the family, one daughter, and two sons,—Gotthardt Dellmann Bernheim, born November 8, 1827, and Charles Hermann Bernheim, born September 4, 1830. In 1832 the family emigrated to America and settled in Pennsylvania where the father joined the Ministerium of Pennsylvania, and entered upon work for the Lutheran Church. He con-

tinued to work in the states of Pennsylvania and Massachusetts until his death September 27, 1847.

The older son, Gotthardt Bernheim, had been sent south in 1846 and came under the instruction of the Rev. John Bachman, D.D., LL.D., who was pastor of St. John's Church, Charleston, S. C., for more than fifty years, and also of the Rev. Ernest L. Hazellius, D.D., who for nearly forty years was a professor of theology in the Lutheran schools of the south. The younger son, Charles Hermann Bernheim, also, finally came south to join his brother, and after his studies were completed, both spent their lives as Lutheran ministers, the most of their work being done in the states of North Carolina and South Carolina. Thus, the conversion of the prospective young Jewish rabbi to Christianity resulted in the giving of three Lutheran ministers to a wide field of service; the father's labors for fifteen years being in the north, and the two sons giving their long years of service to the Church in this particular field of the South.

The Rev. Charles Hermann Bernheim, who served as pastor of Friedens Church, Gibsonville, N. C., from 1868 to 1874, was first granted license to preach by the South Carolina Synod in 1855, and ordained in 1858. At various times he labored in Florida and South Carolina, but his chief work was at his different pastorates in North Carolina. He kept up the family tradition of scholarship, and delighted to tell in vivid style the story of God's guiding hand in the life of his father, his brother and himself.

Sixty-seven Years a Minister

Gotthardt Dellmann Bernheim, D.D., who died October 24, 1916, and was buried from St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Charlotte, N. C., was one of the outstanding men in the Lutheran Church of the United States. A profound scholar, an eloquent minister, and a historian of note, he made a deep impress upon his time. He first served for three years as assistant pastor at St. John's Church, Charleston, S. C., then organized St. Andrew's Church and remained as pastor for five years. In 1858 he joined the North Carolina Synod and his work in this body is witness to his devotion and wise leadership. May 31, 1858, St. Paul's Church was organized at Wilmington, and in January, 1859, St. Mark's Church at Charlotte, under his guidance. Sixty-seven years were spent in the duties demanded by the ministry of the Lutheran Church which he loved so well. Wherever he went he commanded respect by his genuine ability, and carried forward the work entrusted to him by his untiring perseverance. His pen was always busy, and his contributions are outstanding among Lutheran writers of his time. For years he edited a literary magazine known as *At Home and Abroad*, he wrote a history of St. Paul's Church at Wilmington, he published "Localities of the Reformation," and other literary productions came from his pen. His two most important works, however, are the "History of the German Settlements of the Carolinas," and his joint work with Dr. George H. Cox in the "History of the Synod of North Carolina." His visit to Europe in 1876-1877 was largely to secure first hand information about early church history. The importance of the work of an accurate historian cannot be over-estimated, along this line alone, to speak of no other work; Dr. Bernheim has written his name secure in the minds of all intelligent Lutherans.

This inspiring story seemed worth telling, possessing all the elements of romance as it does, and yet being only a few pages from the book of actual life: a father and his two gifted sons, born of stock Jewish, of "the straightest sect," and yet by the hand of mysterious Providence brought to large service in the Lutheran Church.



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